

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARNETT.

INTERVIEW

13507

302

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARNETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

Hazel B. Greene,
Journalist,
March 31, 1938.

An Interview With Paul Garnett
Roebuck, negro, Hugo, Oklahoma.

I was born February 7th, 1882, at a place near Grant. My father, R. D. (Dick) Roebuck, was born at Roebuck Lake in Kiamichi County and my mother, Louise Stephenson Roebuck, was born at Rose Hill, four miles southeast of Hugo. About two miles north of Grant there is a cemetery for negroes only, called Mt. Olivet. It is in School District 14, Township 6 South, Range 13 East. My parents' house stood right in the middle of what is now that cemetery. I was born there in that house. My twin brother and I were born with a caul over our faces. There has always been a superstition that children born thus are gifted with second sight. I have not second sight but I don't know about my brother James. Another superstition is that the caul should be preserved until such time as the children wish to dispose of it somehow. Ours is in a tin can in my trunk. I also have in my trunk a letter, which my grandfather wrote to my mother in 1873, from Fort Arbuckle. He was sold away

HOLBUCK, PAUL BARNETT

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-2-

from my grandmother Stephenson when my mother was a baby and taken to Fort Arbuckle, where he re-married and raised another family. However, he kept up a correspondence with my mother, and this letter is one purporting to tell a lot of the family history, but it is written in such a rambling fashion that I can get no sense out of it. The writing is legible enough, but somewhat faded and there are holes in the letter where it has been folded.

My father and mother are both buried in Mount Olivet cemetery near Grant. Father built this house in 1838. He got the logs from over on Henabby Creek, about two miles southwest of here. They are hewn and in a good state of preservation. Clapboards cover the cracks. The doors are all home made. The lumber was probably hauled from Arthur City because there was a sawmill there and the lumber that ceils that east room is grooved and five tongued and I do not know where it came from.

This house was the only one on this prairie besides Judge Jim Usery's, for a long long time, from Goodland court ground to Nelson. I mean the old Goodland court

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARNETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-3-

ground which was about two miles north and a half mile west of the present town of Goodland. The post office was in the old hewed log home of the Reverend Silas Bacon. There was a grist mill, a blacksmith shop and the log court house, which consisted of one room, and Joel Spring had a big store there. Judge John P. Turnbull was the District Judge when I used to go over there. I don't know how long before that they held court there, or when the post office was established there. I saw many Indians and negroes whipped there. I saw three Indians executed on Goodland court ground for murder. Their names were Loman Gipson, Eseau Wallace and Polie Baker. They were executed at different times. When the railroad was built through here, the post office was moved to the railroad station of Goodland three miles north of the present town of Hugo and Joel Spring moved his store up there, too. They quit holding court at old Goodland then and took everything to the Mayhew court, north of what is now Boswell. I have been told that Mayhew was named for a Mr. Mayhew who lived there.

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARRETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-4-

My father was a Lighthorseman then. After that he got to be a United States Marshal and was one for thirty years, until his death, June 23, 1903. He was some sort of an officer most of his life. I was a deputy sheriff a few times in my life, but I have devoted the most of my life to the ministry. Father was interpreter for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians at the Federal Courts at Paris, Texas, and at Fort Smith, Arkansas. They had no jails here, and the prisoners that they were afraid to turn loose upon their honor were kept chained around to trees until they got a wagon load, then they would load the prisoners into ox-drawn wagons and haul them to Fort Smith for trial. Only Federal prisoners were taken to Fort Smith and sometimes it would take them ten days or two weeks to go up there. It depended upon the weather and the depth of the streams. There were no bridges so if the streams were on a rise travelers would just have to wait until they were fordable. The road from here to Fort Smith was called the "Long Trail Road". It ran along west of Kiamichi River until they got to Tuskahoma. There they crossed it, but not where the bridge is now because

ROELUCK, PAUL GARNETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-5-

the water was always too deep there. The route was from Goodland through T. Lihina, right past Judge Duke's gate, through Tuskahoma and on to Fort Smith, Arkansas. Judge Duke was later governor of the Choctaw Nation.

Folks over this part of the country used to drive cattle to Fort Smith to ship. They did not ship cattle from Goodland for a year or so after the railroad was put in through here. I guess they thought they would save money by driving the cattle through because they would drive the herds and graze them along at nights. I helped drive a herd of cattle to Fort Smith when I was thirteen years old. Bill Self was about the first one to ship cattle from Goodland.

This was a sparsely settled country. The main military road from Doaksville by the way of Rock Chimney crossing on Kiamichi River came right past our front gate, and on toward Durant. Then the trail or road went from Goodland to Nelson, which was the mail route, crossed the military road here by our place. Judge Usery's house was the only one in sight of us or in sight of that mail route, from here to Nelson. Mr. Usery was a white man who married

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARNETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-6-

one of the Roebuck girls; she died and left three young girls. Josephine, now Mrs. Latimer of Oklahoma City. Pinkie or Emma, who became Mrs. Bill Russell. She committed suicide about three years ago. Some prisoners murdered her husband, Bill Russell, on the train at Madill Christmas night 1904, as he was transporting them for delivery to a Texas sheriff of Denison, also named Bill Russell.

Annie Usery was the youngest girl; she is now Mrs. Thomas S. Self. They were married about fifty-eight years ago and live eight miles northwest of Hugo. Judge Usery never re-married. He was County Judge a part of the time and sheriff a part of the time and had to be away from home a great deal so he would bring his little girls over here for Mother to take care of through the day while he would be away at work, so we were raised up together, like brothers and sisters, even if we were negroes, and when the girls got big enough to court, my twin brother and I used to carry notes for them and their beaux, and Mother would try to watch them and keep them from courting too young.

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARRETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-7-

My father was born at the Roebuck place on Roebuck Lake. That was the one on the north side of the lake.

The house was a big one built of cedar logs. Father was twenty-six years old when the slaves were freed, but he never knew any difference because he was treated just like a member of the family, and raised just like William Roebuck's children.

William Roebuck and his wife "Granny" were tortured and robbed once of about \$1,000.00 in gold. A fellow of the name of Tom Carney was suspected of being the ^{one} ^{who} ^{took} leader of the party who came at night and William Roebuck and "Granny" out of bed; took the old lady and the old man into separate rooms and beat them and made them tell where their money was buried, and then the robbers went out in the chimney corner and dug it up. It was in a regular money pot with a sealed lid. Sealed with sealing wax like they used to use to seal stone fruit jars. There were no banks convenient, so folks over here just buried the money around the place somewhere. It was all gold money anyhow, and burying would not injure it. The old folks remained tied up all night and I've forgotten whether or not someone

ROBERTSON, PAUL CARNEPI.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-8-

found them or whether one of them worked loose and untied the other. But they caught the robbers and put them in jail, but I don't remember what they told me they finally did with them. I imagine they whipped them, that was the usual punishment for stealing.

I remember when the Starrs and Youngers used to go through this country raiding and stealing on their way to make raids down in Texas and Mexico. I knew Belle Starr by sight and I knew her brothers, Henry, Pony and Guy Starr.* Once a neighbor of mine, Joe Ainsworth, was plowing in his field about a quarter of a mile southeast of my home. I was out in the field and saw him taking the gears off of his horse and could see somebody there, so I went over there to see what it was all about. It was Belle Starr. She rode off as I came up. He was standing there with a jaced horse. He said, "That woman took my horse"; his was a far better horse than hers and besides hers was ridden down and worn out. I didn't see any gun on her. Maybe she had one, I don't know. He didn't report her to any officers and nobody tried to follow her. All the officers and everybody

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARNETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-9-

else "took out" and hid when they heard that Belle Starr was in the country; people were afraid of all the Starrs. So when any of the Starrs or Youngers were in the country people hid, but they were most afraid of Belle. The Youngers and the Starrs used to come down through here on their way to Texas on raids, stealing and robbing. They had a regular route they used to travel. They crossed Red River at the Jones Crossing; it was named for Wilson Jones' nephew, Sam Jones. The Starrs were a bad bunch. I have been told that Belle was sent to the penitentiary in Missouri and that after she was released she was killed about the time that Scout Younger was killed, by some of the officers in a raid. A few years ago some skeletons were dug up on the Al Nelson farm, just about on their usual route to Texas, and I have always believed that they were skeletons of people whom the Starrs and Youngers killed.

This was a pretty lawless country then and some people thought they could get away with anything, but sometimes they were brought to justice. I remember once when a fellow of the name of Alrich was carrying the mail from Goodland to Doaksville and thence east to Clear Creek and

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARNETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

- 10 -

Lukfata, Alikchi and Eagletown. He was carrying it in a two horse hack. One day he had no passengers and he came in and announced that he had been robbed by two negroes at Salt Springs as he had gone east the day before, that they had held him up at the point of a gun and tied him up to a tree and had taken the mail pouches out in the woods and slit them open and rifled them, then returned the empty bags and went back to the hack and that he stayed tied up until he worked himself loose and went on to Doaksville.

Rather went to the scene of the robbery east of Salt Springs and investigated. The only tracks he could find were those of the mail carrier. Then he arrested him and went to his tent home to search for the money. The man's wife wanted to shoot rather for searching her home but he found the money, about \$120.00, in a sack of corn meal. About a month later the robber was tried at Antlers and sentenced by Judge Clayton to serve five years in the Leavenworth, Kansas, Penitentiary. I used to freight from Goodland railroad station to Doaksville when Tom Sanguin ran the store at Doaksville for Joel Springs. The store at

ROEBUCK, PAUL GARRETT.

INTERVIEW.

13507.

-11-

Doaksville was called the Doaksville Trading Company.

Later, Will Bearden was manager of the store.

I first attended school at Grant in the old log school house there. The Reverend Wylie Homa was my teacher. He was my father's own brother, but his name was Homa, because the Homas owned him. Then after a year or two I was sent to Oak Hill Academy down on Clear Boggy Creek. I must say that the log school house was not right at Grant. It was a mile south of Horse Creek, on the Roebuck Lake road. I attended Oak Hill Academy five years and graduated there. I attended Tuskegee Institute in Alabama for two and a half years where I majored in Public Speaking and Theology. Dr. Carver was a student there when I was. I am a Missionary Baptist minister now.

*Note: An error in this colored man's statement as to relationship of Henry, Pony and Guy Starr to Belle, as is his information on page 9 about the killing of Belle Starr.

Ed.

INDEX CARDS

Ranching--Chickasaw Nation

Hospitality--Chickasaw Nation